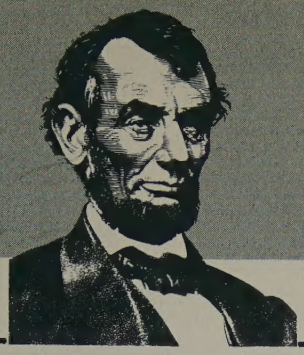

Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
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Number 1478 FORT WAYNE, INDIANA April, 1961

"Within the last 12 hours this city has been the scene of the most terrible tragedies . . ."

Editor's Note: The Lincoln National Life Foundation has recently acquired several letters and documents pertaining to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and the attempted assassination of Secretary of State William H. Seward, that are considered to be of exceptional significance.

The letters were written by a young man named Albert Daggett to his mother and sister who lived at Troy, New York. He served as a clerk in the Department of State. Composed in a Victorian mode of expression these letters reveal that Daggett had a good education even though there are several misspelled words and his sentences are not always well constructed. Perhaps his greatest talent was his excellent handwriting.

It must be remembered that this startling information was recorded in great haste and when passions were at fever heat. Unfortunately, like others at that time, Daggett blamed the crimes on "the authors of this unholy rebellion." Nevertheless, this 19 year old correspondent reveals that he was a competent witness and there is no effort to exaggerate the events or jump to conclusions from heresay evidence.

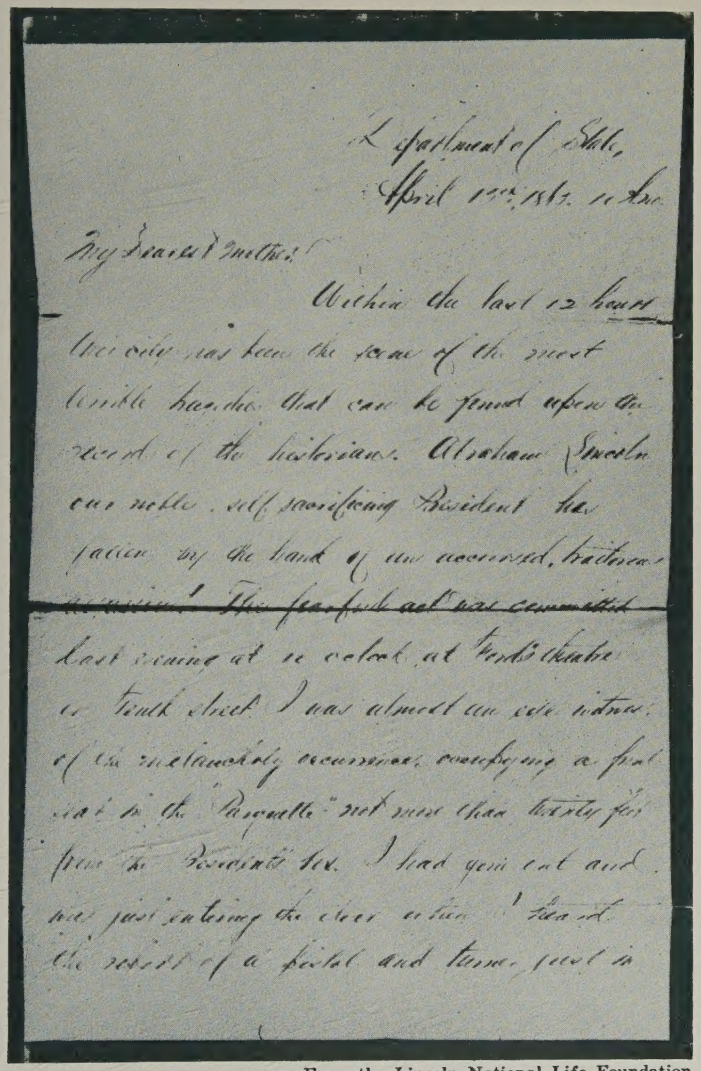
Perhaps, these letters best reveal the excitement in Washington, D. C., following the tragedy at Ford's Theatre and the bloody encounter that transpired at the Seward home. According to Daggett two men were killed in that city for uttering treasonable sentiments, to the effect that they were "glad that President Lincoln had been assassinated." Amusingly enough, even young Daggett with his "seven shooter" in his pocket would not fail to act if he should hear treasonable sentiments.

In this day and age when an effort is apparently being made to minimize the crime and to explain the so-called patriotic motives of the assassins, these letters come as a real shock revealing all the hideous aspects of bloody murder.

R. G. M.

Department of State
April 15th, 1865 10 A.M.
My Dearest Mother

Within the last 12 hours this city has been the scene of the most terrible tragedies that can be found upon the records of the historians. Abraham Lincoln our noble, self sacrificing President has fallen by the hand of an accursed, traitorous assassin! The fearful act was committed last evening at 10 o'clock at Ford's Theatre on Tenth Street. I was almost an eye witness of the melancholy occurrence, occupying a front seat in the "Parquette" not more than twenty feet from the President's box. I had gone out and was just entering the door when I heard the report of a pistol and turned just in time to see the hell-hound of treason leap from the box upon the stage, and with glittering dagger flourishing above his head disappear behind the scenes, as he leaped from the box he exclaimed "Sic semper tyrannis;" and just before he disappeared from the stage he cried out "I have done it, the South is avenged"! It is impossible to describe the intense excitement that prevailed in the theatre. The audience arose as one single person. I helped carry the President out, and we bore our precious burden into the house of Mr. Peterson next door to my boarding house, where he remained until he died, which melancholy event took place at precisely twenty one minutes past seven this morning. It is impossible to describe the awful event. The mind cannot contemplate the results. Mr. Lincoln, to see, and to know whom, was to honor and love him, has released his hold from the "Ship of State" to which he has clung, with such heroic and noble daring, during the past four years of a fratricidal war unknown and unparalleled. The good old ship is now at the mercy of the winds. God grant that she may survive the storm, and anchor in safety in some good harbor, in the harbor of *peace* and prosperity. But Tuesday evening last I listened to his voice, a voice from Richmond and the de-



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

First page of letter written by Albert Daggett to his mother, Mrs. Joseph Daggett twelve hours after Lincoln's assassination. This letter and the others described in this article were placed in the Lincoln National Life Foundation's collection by Mrs. Blanche B. Daggett of Washington, D. C. Mrs. Daggett's husband, Alexander S. Daggett, was the son of Albert Daggett.

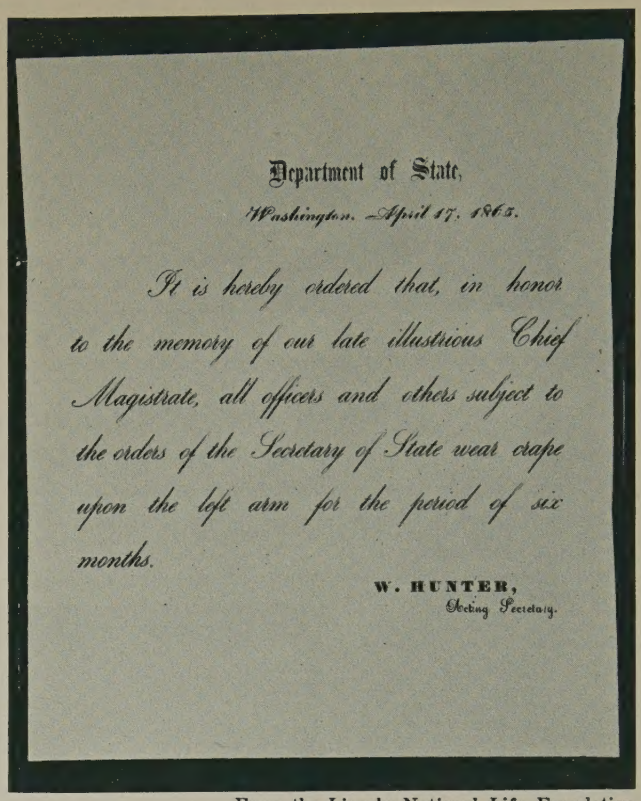
feated army of General Lee, as it rung out clear and loud from the historic window of the executive mansion, in his last speech, the last speech he shall ever make. Cheer upon cheer greeted him last night as he entered the theatre. I looked plainly into his face, and I assure you it was a smiling one, as he stooped in his last bow, the last one ever to be made to an enthusiastic audience—as he entered the door of his private box which was so appropriately decorated with American flags. It is difficult to realize this fearful act, though I have seen the train, motionless from its place, which but a few hours ago directed the affairs of this great Republic, and the rattle of the wheels of the hearse upon the pavement has not yet died away, up the avenue, as the earthly remains of Abraham Lincoln are being borne to the Executive Mansion for a last brief residence there preparatory to their being deposited in the vault of death.

But I have not yet finished this dreadful chapter of horror. At the same hour of the attack upon Mr. Lincoln a murderer entered the house of Secretary Seward with designs upon the life of that good and patriotic statesman. After forcing his way into the house he was stopped by Mr. Frederick W. Seward the Assistant Secretary whose head he crushed in with the but end of a pistol and otherwise wounded with a dagger, he then pushed his way to the chamber of the Secretary, who was still suffering from his recent accident, the fracture of an arm and jaw, and dragging him from his bed sprang upon him and attempted to cut his throat. This he partially succeeded in doing and would undoubtedly have accomplished it had it not been for the interference of the nurse a disabled soldier, who received four stabs while dragging him from the body of Mr. Seward. Major Seward was also badly cut. Supposing his work accomplished he started to leave the room, at the door of which he met Mr. Hansell, the chief messenger in this department. In endeavoring to prevent the escape of the ruffian Mr. Hansell was severly wounded. It is possible that the Secretary will recover, but the Assistant Secretary is said to be beyond the influence of human skill, and probably his soul has ere this passed that dreadful course from which no traveler ever returns. Since the 14th of April 1861 when Fort Sumpter was fired into nothing has occurred so calculated to exasperate the loyal millions of the country and cause them to demand *vengeance* upon the authors of this *unholy rebellion.* Leniency lost its champion when Abraham Lincoln ceased to breathe and now deeds must take the place of words! Andrew Johnson is now President of the United States. Let us hope that his misconduct during the inauguration exercises resulting from a too free use, on account of sickness, of spirits, will be retrieved. I cannot think he will be equal to an Abraham Lincoln; but, supported by the people of the country he will crush this hydra of *treason* and *rebellion North and South* so deep into the soil in which it germinated that the blasts from the trumpet Gabriel will fail to call it forth on the morning of the resurrection!

The Crimson blood of a Lincoln, of a Seward and of a hundred thousand fallen patriots and martyrs calls loudly for revenge and it calls not in vain. The news has just reached me that one traitor—at least—in this city has met his deserts. He dared to say, in company that he was glad that President Lincoln had been assassinated. The words had hardly left his mouth before the bullet from the pistol of a Union Soldier went smashing through his brain. The same fate awaits others if treason does not hold its infamous tongue. My seven shooter is in my pocket and I shall not fail to use it should I hear any such remark. The greatest gloom pervades the community. Every house and store from the most costly and prominent to the most obscure and the poorest is draped in mourning. The faces of the passers by are stamped with the most object grief, even the Sky is weeping great tears, and the Sun is hidden by black clouds. Never has a nation passed through such an awful ordeal as this! It has been positively ascertained that the murderer of President Lincoln was

John Wilkes Booth

an actor who has appeared on the stage in Troy on several occasions. The officers of justice are at his heels and I hope will apprehend him. A reward of *Thirty Thousand dollars* has already been offered for his arrest. Although there have been several rumors of his capture I am



Department of State,
Washington, April 17, 1865.

It is hereby ordered that, in honor to the memory of our late illustrious Chief Magistrate, all officers and others subject to the orders of the Secretary of State wear crape upon the left arm for the period of six months.

W. HUNTER,
Acting Secretary.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

State Department Order that all employees wear crape upon the left arm for a period of six months in memory of the "late illustrious Chief Magistrate." This order was sent by Daggett to his sister Abbie.

sorry that they are unfounded so far as I can ascertain; but, that he will be captured I have not the least doubt, it is only a matter of time. I understand that no trains will be permitted to leave Washington today, and consequently no mails can go. I will keep this letter open until tomorrow.

Sunday, April 16 3 P.M.

The arrangements for the funeral are rapidly approaching completion. I think it will take place on Thursday. The rebel General Payne has just passed my window under a strong guard. He is a notorious guerilla chief. It is said Booth has been captured and placed on board a monitor for safe keeping. The house in which President Lincoln breathed his last has been visited by thousands this morning and if they do not tear down the house by inches I shall be very much surprised. I have several relics of the awful event. Among them are a piece of the President's collar stained with his blood and several pieces of the sheet and pillow case on which he died; these are also stained with his blood. I was very much surprised to meet Stimetz here this morning. He is in one of the Departments and gets $1600. per year. I must now close. No Department will be open until after the funeral and no stores nor places of amusement are to be opened. Write soon.

Your affectionate son
A. Daggett

P. S. I enclose a Washington Chronicle.
Will write Annie and Abbie soon. You must make this letter do for all the family.

A. D.

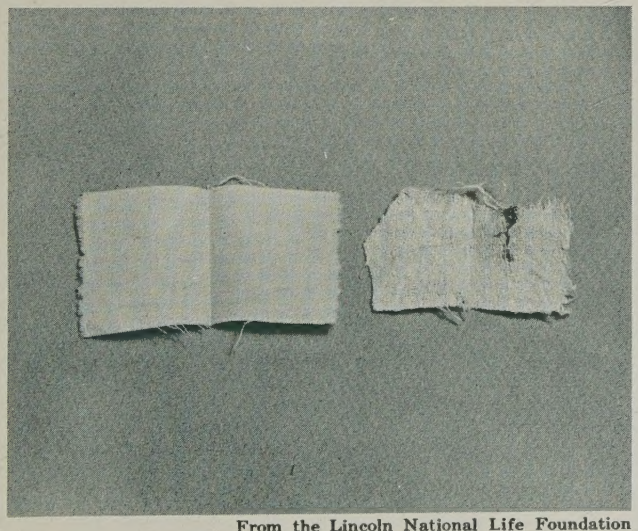
Washington, D. C.
April 16th 1865

My Dear Sister

Your letter dated the 12th inst and postmarked Troy 15th inst was just received. How can I write you? How can one find words in this dreadful hour, I can scarcely realize the dreadful thing. When I look back on the occurrences of the past few days it seems to me like

a hideous dream and that I have just awakened from it, but alas: it is too true. I saw the whole of it and helped carry the President into the house. They have indeed slain their best friend and have robbed us of the purest and ablest man the country has known since the days of the great Washington. Oh may the vengeance of a just God speedily over take the infamous, accursed villian. I have not, can not muster up the courage to again write the dreadful details. I have written mother a complete account just as I saw it. Every minute the thought comes into my mind "O No" it is not true, but alas, it is. I shall never, to my dying day forget the look of horror that was stamped on the countenances of that vast audience. And when I saw our beloved President stripped to the waist and his face covered with blood, and apparently dead, I thought I should lose my senses for ever. The piercing shrieks of Mrs. Lincoln added to the dreadfulness of the horrible scene. Today the city is settled down somewhat, and people begin to realize the awful calamity. A calamity that effects the whole Nation, not individuals alone. History affords no para'el to the scenes that occurred on that ever to be remembered Friday night. Yesterday all was intense excitement. We had not begun to realize the horrible dream but today but one look pervades the vast community, as if there was but one head to it, and that is the most intense grief. Every house in the city and every store, from the highest to the lowest is draped in mourning, and intelligence reaches us that it is the same every where else. Truly "a nation mourns a nation's loss." This afternoon the notorious Gen. Payne who has once before been captured and released on parol, was brought into the city by a guard of cavalry and taken up through the streets to the Provost Marshal's office followed by an immense crowd. When it was ascertained that he was the notorious guerella chief who had once vio'ated his parol the excitement was intense and he would have been hung without ceremony had the officers not hurried him away by a back entrance, the crowd was finally dispersed by a regiment of Infantry. All the streets are patrolled by cavalry and mounted police. No trains are permitted to leave the city and every avenue is guarded. It is reported here that the assassin whose name is John Wilkes Booth, has been arrested and is confined on board one of the monitors. I hope it is true. But cannot find out for the authorities dare not announce it. Two men have already been killed for uttering treasonable sentiments. I shall not hesitate to shoot anyone who uses such language in my presence. Secretary Seward is better today. I saw him this morning, he sat up about 15 minutes. Frederick Seward is still unconscious, but the surgeons have strong hopes for his recovery. The Departments are all closed and will remain so until after the funeral which will probably take place on Thursday. Great preparations are being made for the melancholy event. The war news is very encouraging but is scarcely alluded to in this hour of intense grief. Vice President Johnson has been inaugurated and declares his intention of carrying on the war to the bitter end. No *peace* for the Rebel leaders is now thought of and the infamous leaders of this unhallowed rebellion will meet the reward their treason so justly merits. I have secured some mementoes and send you some. One is a piece of the pillow case on which the President's head rested and the other is a portion of a towel which was bound about his head. I have been promised a small lock of his hair by Mr. Peterson, in whose house he died. I have seen the pistol which was used and it seems an almost harmless instrument. I was also shown the knife which was held in his hand when he leaped from the stage. Write soon.

Your aff. Bro.
A. Daggett



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

A piece of the pillow case on which the president's head rested and a portion of the towel which was bound about his head. These relics are mentioned in Daggett's letter to his sister Abbie, dated April 16, 1865

Washington, D. C.
April 23rd 1865

My Dear Mother

Since I wrote you last enough has transpired to prove that we have escaped, by a miracle as it were, from a terrible end. When I look back over the events of the past two weeks I can scarcely realize then, so sudden has been the transition from joy to grief. Tis said "that whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth" and that is our only consolation beside the reflection that it might have been worse.

The villians are rapidly being apprehended and I hope that ere this week passes I shall have the pleasure of writing that Booth has been captured. Soldiers are beginning to arrive here. Yesterday I saw about 5000 Cavalry as they passed the Department. The Griswold Cavalry was among them. I saw Willie and Charlie Laith, they looked fat and hearty as well as muddy. They will now have a comparatively easy time of it.

I understand that 20,000 troops arrived at Alexandria this morning and will soon be here. We are very much pained at the news from Sherman but hope Gen. Grant will make it all right. I wrote Annie a long letter today. I suppose you can read it if you want to. *I do not hear that you have gone to keeping house yet.*

Your Aff Son
A. Daggett

"I was present at the theatre and saw the terrible crime committed which removes from us a second Washington."

Editor's Note: The acquisition of the Daggett correspondence has led to a review of a remarkable letter which the Lincoln National Life Foundation acquired in 1959. This letter was written twelve days after Lincoln's assassination by an eyewitness of the event. The writer was John Deering, Jr., an employee in the Treasury Department. The place of the writer's employment has been determined by his statement that, "One of our clerks, Mr. Williamson, has been the tutor of the boy (Tad Lincoln)." As Alexander Williamson held a minor position in the Treasury Department it is assumed that Deering was in the same department of government.

The letter written at Washington, D. C., addressed to Miss E. M. Griggs, dated April 26, 1865, is a long one. The portion of the eleven page letter devoted to Lincoln's assassination and funeral constitutes less than one-half of the entire message. This manuscript might be designated as a love letter, and the writer in a postscript asked his dear friend: "Won't you give me your photograph? I want it badly. You shall have mine if you want it, as soon as I have one taken."

Miss Griggs was a music teacher at Vassar College and that Poughkeepsie, New York, woman's college was only four years old when the letter was written. The letter was presented to the Foundation by W. C. Lange of Redlands, California.

Deering from his description and observations of the tragic crime appears more mature than the nineteen year old Daggett. However, like Daggett he blames "the leaders of the Rebellion" with a crime they did not commit.

R. G. M.

My heart sinks when I try to speak or write of Abraham Lincoln. I cannot yet realize that he is indeed dead and the troubled events of the past two weeks seem like the phantasius of a dream. I was present at the theatre and saw the terrible crime committed which removes from us a *second Washington.* That evening about 7 o'clock I saw the Rebel General Ewell, and five others, who were captured before Petersburg a few days before,

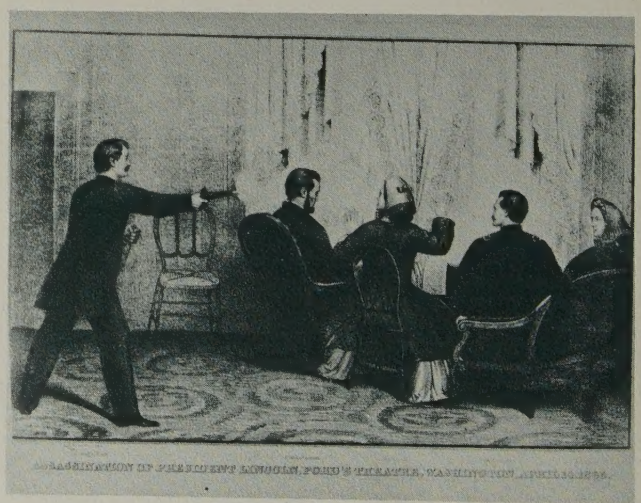
and just after looking at them, my companion, who had never seen Gen. Grant proposed that we should go to Ford's Theatre as it had been announced in the evening papers that he would be there together with the Prsident and Mrs. Lincoln. Although I had seen the Lieutenant General I was willing and anxious to see him again and so we went, and chose seats in the dress-circle, just opposite the private box—or boxes for there were two of them merged in one, and called the state box, which by the way was highly decorated with flags and a picture of Washington—in which the presidential party would sit. I had often seen the President and his wife there, and knew very well where they would sit. Shortly after eight the President, Mrs. Lincoln, Miss Harris—a daughter of Senator Harris of New York—and her foster-brother, Maj. Rathbone, arrived and took their positions where we could get an excellent view of each one. The main object of our presence was disappointed. Gen. Grant was not there but had gone to New Jersey to see his family. We soon got over our disappointment however, observing the play, which you know, was "Our American Cousin." The acting was excellent as of course it would be with Laura Keene's company—and the President and Mrs. Lincoln seemed to enjoy it highly—the latter in particular, laughing often and very heartily. I could detect a broad smile on Uncle Abraham's face very often, while, at other times, he rested his face in both of his hands, bending forward, and seemingly buried in deep thought. At the end of the second scene of the third act while Asa Trenchard "our American cousin" was on the stage alone I was startled by the sudden report of a *pistol*, which rang loud and clear throughout the theatre. I thought that it sounded on the stage near the farther end, and I looked in that direction, but seeing nothing unusual the thought struck me, "perhaps the President has been assassinated" for I had often thought of the probability of such an event on some such occasion. As I looked toward the President's box I saw some commotion, and heard a slight disturbance, when, in a second, the form of a man appeared on the balustrade standing perfectly erect, hatless, with a knife in his right hand, shouted in a clear sonorous voice "*Sic Semper tyrannis*," leaped to the stage below—a distance of ten or twelve feet—and striding across the stage, disappeared before the audience could recover from the shock. Then arose loud cries of "Kill him," "Kill him."—for they knew intuitively what had happened. Mrs. Lincoln screamed, the audience rushed onto the stage, the actresses turned pale—even through their rouge and "lily-white", and confusion reigned generally—soon after, the President already dying—was carried across the street and the audience left the house. The streets were immediately filled, and I then heard that the Secretary of State, and his two sons, and nurse had been attacked, and nearly murdered. It was then reported that Gen. Grant had been killed in Philadelphia, and in a short time, they had everybody of any consequence in the city assassinated, until I almost began to doubt the fact of my own existence. It was a night of horror such as I hope never to witness again. Towards morning I retired "but not to sleep." Visions of murder and death floated through my brain and before my eyes, and I arose at 9 the next forenoon, thoroughly worn out. Of course there was no work. Everybody arrayed his house in mourning—and men women and children—and *negroes* wore an expression of horror and grief such as I never witnessed before.

The next Sunday I went to the church where Mr. Lincoln had attended. His pew was draped in mourning, but every other was crowded, and hundreds were unable to enter the house at all. The performances were very solemn and interesting. I also went to my regular place of worship (Rev. Dr. Hall's "Church of the Epiphany" Episcopal) and heard a beautiful tribute to the lamented dead. Appropriate allusion was to the event in every church except one, which is known to be of "Secesh" sympathies.

Of the funeral ceremonies it is useless to speak. They were grand and appropriate. The procession was something to remember for a life time. Your humble servant formed a very humble part of it, and mourned *really* as well as ostensibly. I will send you "Harpers' Weekly" containing illustrations of the event of that and previous days which will give you accurate ideas, such as I could not convey in writing. The pictures are all *correct.* Especially that of President Lincoln at home, the boy of course being "Thad," and an exact . . . presentment of that enterprising youth. (By the way one of our clerks, Mr. Williamson, has been the tutor of the boy, up to the time of his father's death).

Poor Mrs. Lincoln. How I pity her. She was proud of her husband, as well she might be, despite his plainness. And do you know that he was not half so plain as represented to be? His was a strong, rugged, honest face, beaming at the same time with gentleness and good nature. His smile was something to remember forever. It was positively *beautiful.* I never saw one like it on any other human face. It seemed to come from the heart and it certainly touched that of the beholder. Notwithstanding his reputation as a "joker" his face was habitually a sad one. It almost always had a mournful, inexpressibly touching expression, so that you could not look upon it without pitying him. Could it be that it was prophetic of his sad end? I noticed this expression particularly on the evening of the assassination and saw him frequently cover his face with both hands as if busily engaged in thought. Of course this might not have had any peculiar significance, yet when thinking of the later events of that horrid night, such little acts appear magnified and imbued with a deeper meaning. He was a loving husband and father and *one of the best men that ever lived,* and when I think of his death there comes over me a feeling of personal loss. Of course I could not be expected to be acquainted with him—I aspired to no such honor—but I had seen him often, and have taken him by the hand more than once. I heard him, too, deliver the inaugural address the fourth of March last, when he stood high on the east front of the Capitol and looked, with his fatherly smile and *beaming spectacles* like a real *pater familias,* and spoke words of gentleness and forebearance to "our misguided Southern brethren" such as they never deserved. I heard him too only a week before he died, when he stood at an upper window in the "White House" and enunciated his views on the "Reconstruction" question.

He spoke too forgivingly, as I thought, and that is what gives me resignation now. I think it "all for the best," and while I mourn the national loss as anyone, I yet think we should rejoice that now the Rebel chiefs will receive *justice* instead of *mercy.* The South will find to its cost that the wrong man has been killed and will rue the day that Abraham Lincoln died and *Andrew Johnson* became president. To use an homely expression, the Southern people have "jumped out of the frying pan into the fire." I have seen and heard President Johnson and I am convinced he is the "right man in the right place" and when he said "the leaders (of the Rebellion) I would *hang,*" I know that he meant it and will do it, if ever he catches them.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

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